A year ago, murder was done here. Another set of murders occurred in Jackson, Mississippi. There are many like myself who will always believe that those killed in Jackson had to die at all, they were lucky to die when they did, so that someone besides their classmates, their mothers and their teachers would know that they lived and died at all.

But that is all history now, and we, like good students, are predetermined to either learn from it, and move ahead, or doomed to repeat it again and again.

Repeating it means more than Guardsmen and dead bodies and blood-thirsty policemen on college campuses; it means that we will never get free from the trap that has been set for us, the trap that shows movement and agitation rising and ebbing and rising and now ebbing again.

In those terms, Kent State was a high-water mark. It signaled a new kind of rage on the campus, among many of the young who had chosen not to be enraged before. At Kent State in 1970, bullets ceased to discriminate, just as billy clubs stopped discriminating in Chicago in 1968.

But that rage was never translated into any kind of movement, demonstrating that rage generated by instant death is perhaps not
sufficient to sustain an orderly, disciplined attack on the oppression
and wrong that you are here learning how to become a part of.

What will it take, then, to build and sustain a determined attempt
to literally overthrow the grip held on all of the oppressed people
living inside her shores as well as those just now beginning their
struggle around the globe.

What is immediately obvious is how it cannot be done. It cannot
be done, for example, by engaging in adventurism of the sort that
results in appealing rhetoric but also in increased repression for
this country's non-white population. Revolution is seldom precipitated
through exercise of the vocal cords, and slander, however clever, will
never substitute for scientific analysis.

Woodstockism cannot be tolerated while Watts exists; ROTC on the
campus cannot compete for the attention of today's activist with
rats in the ghetto. Debates about the relative revisionism of the
late Ho Chi Minh are not allowable in a land with no revolutionary
ideology of its own.

It is not simply that these things are unequal but that one has
no place beside the other; it is foolish to ask a people whose daily
preoccupation is with survival to appreciate the niceties of North
Korea's position on the women question or whether the Army discriminates
against homosexuals, or whether Tide pollutes more than Ivory Snow.
Survival, then, is precisely the question for all of America's underclass, and particularly so for black people. Every current statistic suggests that we are gradually sinking into a pathological state induced by our constant position on the bottom of the American heap, and every current study and analysis demonstrates that despite whatever minimal achievements we have struggled through over the last decade, our position in relation to everyone else is worsening.

We come to this point in 1971 through a peculiar history, made peculiar not just by color and condition and previous and present servitude, but through the availability of differing sets of alternatives.

It is proper to divide the black struggle of the last decades into two distinct periods. In an article in the current Harper's magazine, Bayard Rustin describes the periods eloquently. While there is some disagreement to be found with his suggestion of what must happen in the future, there can be found none with his analysis of what has happened in the past. Let me quote him at great length. He says:

"... The first phase, which covered something like the first half of the decade, was one in which the movement's clear objective was to destroy the the legal foundations of racism in America. Thus the locale of the struggle was the South, the evil to be eliminated was Jim Crow, and the enemy, who had a special talent for arousing moral outrage among even the most reluctant sympathizers with the cause, was the rock-willed
"Now, one thing about the South more than any other has been obscured in the romantic vision of the region - of ancient evil, of defeat, of enduring rural charm - that has been so much of our literary and intellectual tradition; for the Negro, Southern life had precisely a quality of clarity, a clarity which while oppressive was also supportive. The Southern caste system and folk culture rested upon a clear, albeit unjust, set of legal and institutional relationships which prescribed roles for individuals and established a modicum of social order. The struggle that was finally mounted against that system was actually fed and strengthened by the social environment from which it emerged. No profound analysis, no overriding social theory was needed in order both to locate and understand the injustices that were to be combated. All that was demanded of one was sufficient courage to demonstrate against them. One looks back upon this period in the civil-rights movement with nostalgia.

During the second half of the Sixties, the center of the crisis shifted to the sprawling ghettos of the North. Here black experience was radically different from that of the South. The stability of institutional relationships was largely absent in Northern ghettos, especially among the poor. Over twenty years ago, the black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier was able to see the brutalizing effect of urbanization upon
lower-class blacks: '... the bonds of sympathy and community of interests that held their parents together in the rural environment have been unable to withstand the disintegrating forces in the city.' Southern blacks migrated north in search of work, seeking to become transformed from a peasantry into a working class. But instead of jobs they found only misery, and far from becoming a proletariat, they came to constitute a Lumpenproletariat, an underclass of rejected people. Frazier's prophetic words resound today with terrifying precision: '... as long as the bankrupt system of Southern agriculture exists, Negro families will continue to seek a living in the towns and cities of the country. They will crowd the slum areas of Southern cities or make their way to Northern cities, where their family life will become disrupted and their poverty will force them to depend upon charity.'

"Out of such conditions, social protest was to emerge in a form peculiar to the ghetto, a form which could never have taken root in the South except in such large cities as Atlanta or Houston. The evils in the North are not easy to understand and fight against, or at least not as easy as Jim Crow, and this has given the protest from the ghetto a special edge of frustration. There are few specific injustices, such as a segregated lunch counter, that offer both a clear object of protest and a good chance of victory. Indeed, the problem in the North is not one of social injustice so much as the results of institutional pathology. Each of the various institutions touching the lives of
urban blacks - those relating to education, health, employment, housing and crime - is in need of drastic reform. One might say that the Northern race problem has in good part become simply the problem of the American city - which is gradually becoming a reservation for the unwanted, most of whom are black. . . ."

"If the problems of the ghetto do not lend themselves to simple analyses or solutions, then, this is because they cannot be solved without mounting a total attack on the inadequacies endemic to, and injustices embedded in, all of our institutions. . . ."

Rustin then sums up where we are and what we face by stating that "The truth about the situation of the Negro today is that there are powerful forces, composed largely of the corporate elite and Southern conservatives, which will resist any change in the economic or racial structure of this country that might cut into their resources or challenge their status; and such is precisely what any program genuinely geared to improve this lot must do. Moreover, these forces today are not merely resisting change. With their representative Richard Nixon in the White House, they are engaged in an assault on the advances made during the past decade. It has been Nixon's tragic and irresponsible choice to play at the politics of race, not, to be sure, with the primitive demagoguery of a "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, say, but nevertheless with the
same intent of building a political majority on the basis of white hostility to blacks. So far he has been unsuccessful, but the potential for the emergence of such a reactionary majority does exist, especially if the turbulence and racial polarization which we have recently experienced persists.

"What is needed, therefore, is not only a program that would effect some fundamental change in the distribution of America's resources for those in the greatest need of them, but also a political majority that will support such a program. . . ."

Here we part company, but I think his analysis suggests a partial way to escape from the trap of politics always escalating into protest culminating in rebellion resulting in repression that we seem continually headed toward.

That is the construction of a political movement that can seize power in the standard, civics text-book fashion of electoral victory after electoral victory, while in parallel fashion it allows for the growing nationalist sentiment that the American black community is now pregnant with.

This pregnancy can be stillborn or aborted by having majority America reinforce the concentration camp and reservation psychosis that is slowly encircling our native-born colonial population, or it can give birth to the kind of ethnic diversity that we so falsely insist
our pluralistic society permits.

If politics depresses you, consider that when the Cuban people overthrew Batista, they underwent political change; as the Vietnamese continue their centuries old struggle to be free of foreign domination, they are and have undergone political change.

You may long for their activism and militant and military manner, but you should remember what Che Guevara said it seems so many years ago: "The streets of Harlem are not the mountains of the Sierra Maestre."

It is particularly important that you involve yourself in political activism of the broadest sense. This is not simply election day doorbell ringing, but the more important task of building constituencies of common interest that can force change through their votes, through their measured feet marching in the streets, or through whatever form of mass action they - not you - choose to undertake.

It is important for you because it offers you a chance at what black people have been seeking for 352 years: a chance to have something to say about what is being done to you, all about you.

It is important because you can offer some life and hope for a people without hope who are close to spiritual and political death, and it is important because a year ago this month many of you promised you would do something and then did nothing at all.

It is important finally, because most of you will do nothing anyway, no matter how many speeches are made or how many shots are
fired or bodies counted or babies starve to death, and it is important because since your mothers and fathers didn't do it, your children may not have a chance to do it.

George Wald, a Nobel Laureat in biology, summed it up in a speech he delivered two years ago. He said then:

"About two million years ago, man appeared. He has become the dominate species on the earth. All other living things, animal and plant, live by his sufferance. He is the custodian of life on earth, and in the solar system. It's a big responsibility.

"The thought that we're in competition with Russians or with Chinese is all a mistake, and trivial. We are one species, with a world to win. There's life all over this universe, but the only life on this solar system is on earth, and in the whole universe, we are the only max men.

"Our business is with life, not death. Our challenge is to give what account we can of what becomes of life in the solar system, this corner of the universe that is our home; and most of all, what becomes of men - all men, of all nations, colors and creeds. This has become one world, a world for all men. It is only such a world that can now offer us life, and the chance to go on."

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